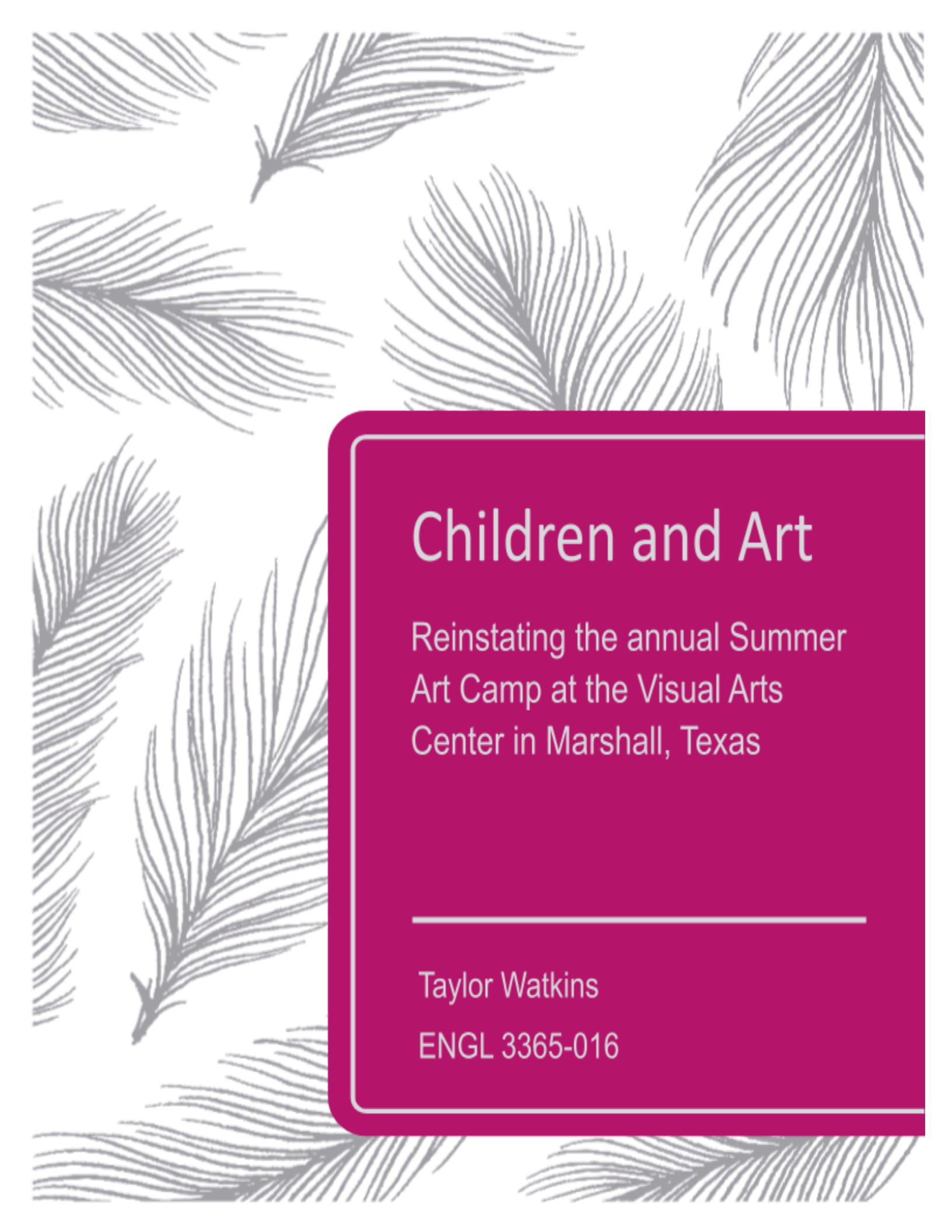




Children and Art

Reinstating the annual Summer
Art Camp at the Visual Arts
Center in Marshall, Texas

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ABSTRACT

The city of Marshall, Texas has a relatively small population of about 24,000 according to a national 2016 census (United States Census Bureau). The town was in its hay day in the 1980s but has since declined into an impoverished town with only the ability to fund necessary accommodations. This recommendation report will consider the importance of reintroducing a summer art program in Marshall that had been cut due to insufficient funding years ago. This report will include several expert opinions on children's need to express their creativity through a social program and be encouraged to pursue an interest in art, as well as weigh the options necessary to have the summer art program reinstituted in the city.

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Introduction

The Problem

From the early 2000s, the Visual Arts Center in Marshall, Texas hosted an art camp during the summers in order to inspire children to explore their creative side. As a child, I attended these camps every summer, and broadened my knowledge of art history, artistic techniques, color schemes, and a variety of other elements related to art. It was an incredibly educational experience, and one that I found was helpful in my creative development.

In the year 2009, however, the Visual Arts Center stopped hosting the summer art camp due to a lack of volunteers and, to a more serious extent, a lack of funding. The focus was shifted to building a new



STEM school in Marshall, and therefore any unnecessary monetary liabilities ceased to exist.

Figure 1: The Marshall Visual Arts Center

While STEM is indeed an important aspect in a child's life, I would argue that it is not so important as to sacrifice the arts in order for the STEM fields to progress. Therefore, it is critical to reintroduce the annual summer art camps into the city of Marshall and once again provide a social learning environment for the creative arts.

Methods

Researching Text

While researching the psychological effects behind the importance of having a creative outlet in a child's development, I came across three academic articles that stress the necessity of art in a child's life.

The first is written by Kathy Unrath and Mick Luehrman and entitled "Bringing Children to Art: Bringing Art to Children". The article as a whole argues that surrounding children with art, such as taking a field trip to an art museum, stimulates a creative artistic curiosity that can be implemented in both the classroom and in the personal lives of children. This indicates that a summer art camp would encourage children to take art education classes later in their academic lives, such as an art history class, or to pursue a career that focuses on artistic elements, such as graphic design. Based on the information in this article, it can be gathered that reinstating the summer art camp at the Visual Arts Center could begin a career path for a child that was previously undecided.

The second article is written by Marjorie Schiller and is entitled "The Importance of Conversations About Art With Young Children". In the article, Schiller lists three necessities to keep in mind when teaching art to children: children need opportunities to create, become aware of, and look and talk about art every day (Schiller 26). This indicates that an exposure to art and obtaining the ability to have a conversation about artistic elements is strongly suggested to be involved in educational experiences. A summer art camp would be the ideal place for children to acquire Schiller's three necessities.

The third article is written by Bernard Young and is entitled "Children's Perceptions About Art". In it, Young very specifically argues that a "child's participation and working in art is an ideal means for developing visual perspectives that are a part of the larger world" (Young 47). This implies that, even if a child does not go into a career focused around art in the future, the central tools than an exposure to art would give will prove helpful to the child later in life. Therefore, exposing children to a week-long art camp at an impressionable age will allow for some insight on these central tools.

Drawing from these articles, an opportunity to experiment with and learn about art is vital. This is why I propose that the Visual Arts Center should relaunch the camp, as it would provide the children of Marshall with a place to indulge in their own creativity.

Researching Figures

The AEP Wire, a journal written by the Arts Educational Partnership, introduced a study conducted by James S. Caderall in the late 1990s that compared the different successes of 25,000 high school students and how each of their respective high schools treated the arts. Figure 2 below demonstrates the statistics of these students from “arts-rich” high schools versus “arts-poor” high schools.

This study came to prove that students that attended “arts-rich” high schools, or schools that had a high influence in the arts and humanities rather than solely focusing on areas of STEM, had a higher post-graduation success rate than the students that attended “arts-poor” high schools, or schools that stressed STEM areas and put less of a focus on the arts and humanities.

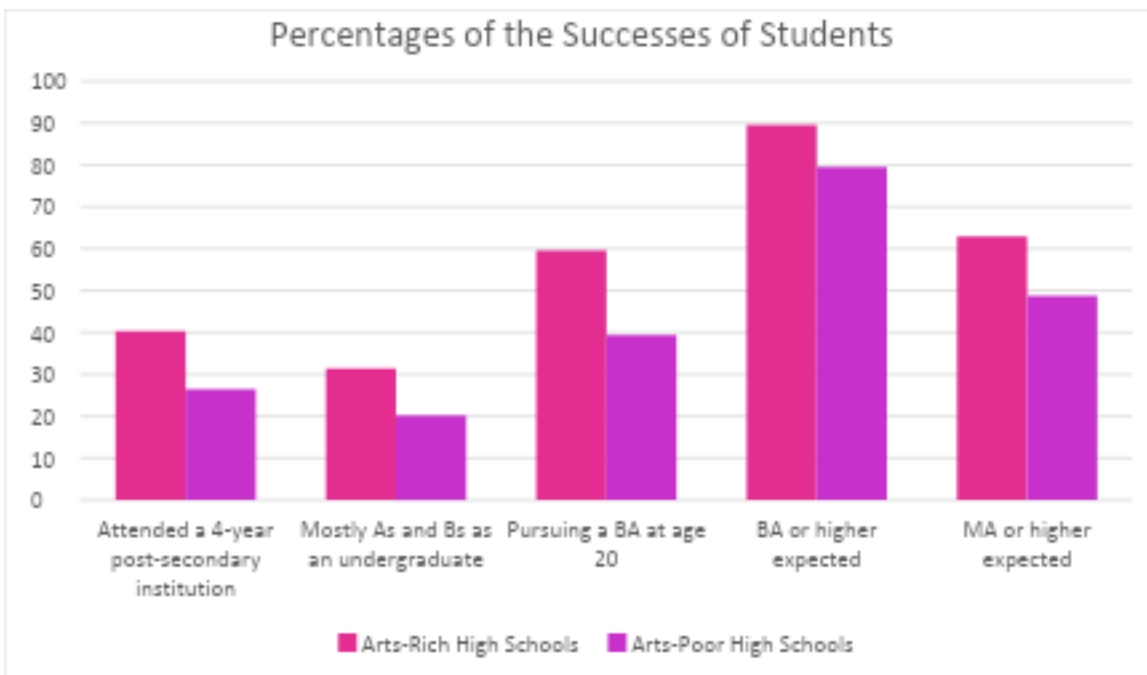


Figure 2: Comparing “Arts-Rich” to “Arts-Poor” High School Students

Results

Option 1: Crowdfunding

“Crowdfunding” is defined as “the activity or process of raising money from a large number of people, typically through a website, as for a project or small business” (Dictionary.com). A few crowdfunding sites and apps can readily provide a way for the citizens of Marshall to help fund an annual summer art camp, such as GoFundMe, Kickstarter, and CrowdRise.

This could most likely be the most hands-free way to raise money for the city to reinstate the summer art camp. However, a concern with crowdfunding is that the funds would come solely from the generosity of the citizens. As there is no reward for donating other than feeling like the person made a difference in his or her community, citizens would have no incentive to donate. Therefore, it could be possible that using this method would not raise enough money to fund the art camp.

On that note, several existing charities and projects exist solely due to crowdfunding. Through the use of social media sites as well as the efficiency of small-town community word-of-mouth, it is very plausible that the art camp could raise the sufficient amount of funds needed in order to revive itself.

Option 2: Bake Sale

A bake sale has been used in America as a way of raising money for decades. This method has been proven successful for fundraising for projects and events time and time again. As opposed to crowdfunding, a bake sale would provide incentive for citizens of Marshall to donate money because they receive baked goods in return.

Another positive factor involved in a bake sale is that the participants would be the parents of the children that would participate in the summer art camp. This introduces the idea of the art camp to other families in the community, such as at church or a PTA meeting.

The downside to a bake sale, however, is that those who participate would not receive any money for bringing their baked goods for the bake sale. This means that, if the bake sale failed to raise the sufficient funds for the art camp, then the parents and volunteers that brought baked goods would have wasted their money and supplies. This possibility could deter some volunteers from participating in the bake sale.

Option 3: Hosted by Schools

Because the summer art camp would be an educational opportunity for children of the Marshall community, it would make sense that schools in the area could provide assistance with the art camp.

Schools interested in helping could donate art supplies that are collected at the beginning of the school year, therefore reducing the cost of funding the camp. Additionally, teachers in the Marshall Independent School District could volunteer to teach at the art camp as well—because the camp only lasts a week in the summer, when teachers are off-duty, it would not be a time-consuming commitment. Schools could also advertise the camp to the students that attend, bringing about more interest and, therefore, more volunteers and donations.

The issue with the schools hosting the art camp, however, is that there are many schools in the Marshall area that are exclusively STEM-focused schools. Because the camp focuses on art, the STEM schools might not be interested in donating supplies and volunteers to a camp that does not instill the same educational values that they do.

Recommendation

Ultimately, I would recommend that the best option to use in order to fund the summer art camp is to have it hosted by schools at the Marshall Visual Arts Center.

As mentioned before, schools have a multitude of art supplies, since most schools require that students bring in supplies at the beginning of the year. The supplies that are left over from the school year, then, could be used for the summer art camp and donated to the Visual Arts Center. Through the combined effort of the multitude of schools in the Marshall area, the amount of supplies should be enough for the camp to use until its conclusion after a week's time.

Again, teachers would also be able to volunteer their services to the art camp, as most teachers are off during the summers and no longer have to commit time to work. As an incentive, it is also possible that the teachers could keep any supplies that is left over from the camp to use in their classrooms the following school year.

There is the issue that STEM schools would not be willing to help the art camp. However, as places that provide education to children in the Marshall area, it is also plausible that the STEM

schools could see this as an opportunity to expose their students to a side of learning that they do not typically see during the school year. The camp could give them insight on art and humanities that the students do not focus on while enrolled.

An annual summer art camp at the Marshall Visual Arts Center would be a brilliant opportunity for Marshall's children no matter the method of funding. Please use whatever means suitable in order to make this opportunity a reality.

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Appendix

Source for Figure 1:

- City of Marshall Texas Official Site: Visual Arts Center. www.marshalltexas.net/departments/visual-art-center. Accessed 21 Mar. 2018.

Source for Figure 2:

- Catterall, James S. "Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art: The Effects of Education in the Visual and Performing Arts on the Achievements and Values of Young Adults." *Imagination Group*, 2009. Accessed 21 Mar. 2018.